

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

March 17, 2020

The Honorable Joseph J. Simons
Chairman
Federal Trade Commission
600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20580

Dear Chairman Simons:

We write to express our serious concerns with reports of price gouging in the wake of the COVID-19 public health emergency. As reported by the *New York Times* and others, a number of essential items have become scarce.¹ Healthcare workers are being asked to reuse personal protective equipment—like masks and single-use gowns—because their supplies are running low.² Moreover, many Americans are unable to find essential household items such as hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies in their local stores or online marketplaces. All the while, profiteers who have cleaned the shelves of hundreds of stores are hoarding these very same supplies or charging unconscionable prices.

This misconduct places critical goods out of reach for those who need them most. Americans who fear for their own and their loved ones' health and safety should not be further victimized. In light of these concerns and the urgency of this rapidly evolving health crisis, we strongly urge the Federal Trade Commission to take immediate action to protect consumers from price gouging during this declared public health emergency. In the meantime, we will continue to pursue other means, including legislation, to assist your efforts and help consumers.

¹ See, e.g., Jack Nicas, *He Has 17,700 Bottles of Hand Sanitizer and Nowhere to Sell Them*, NEW YORK TIMES (Mar. 14, 2020) (www.nytimes.com/2020/03/14/technology/coronavirus-purell-wipes-amazon-sellers.html); Jessica Guynn & Kelly Tyko, *Gouge Much? Purell for \$149, Face Masks for \$20: Coronavirus Price Hikes Are Making Everyone Mad*, USA TODAY (Mar. 3, 2020) (www.usatoday.com/story/money/2020/03/03/coronavirus-hand-sanitizer-face-masks-price-gouging-amazon-walmart-ebay/4933920002/).

² See, e.g., Lisa Kashinsky, Author, *Massachusetts Hospitals Face Shortages of Protective Equipment in Coronavirus Outbreak*, BOSTON HERALD (Mar. 14, 2020, 5:53 PM) (www.bostonherald.com/2020/03/14/massachusetts-hospitals-face-shortages-of-protective-equipment-in-coronavirus-outbreak/).

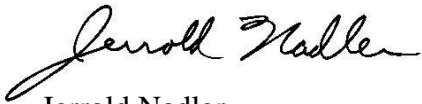
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Thank you for your attention to this matter.

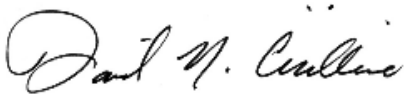
Sincerely,



Jerrold Nadler
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce



David N. Cicilline
Chairman
Subcommittee on Antitrust,
Commercial and Administrative
Law



Jan Schakowsky
Chair
Subcommittee on Consumer
Protection and Commerce

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cc: The Honorable Jim Jordan
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary

The Honorable Greg Walden
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce

The Honorable F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr.
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Antitrust, Commercial and Administrative Law of the Committee on
the Judiciary

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce of the Committee on Energy
and Commerce